



The United States – A Nation Committed to Safe, Legal, and Humane Migration

“America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time. Our new immigrants are just what they’ve always been – people willing to risk everything for the dream of freedom. And America remains what she has always been – the great hope on the horizon, an open door to the future, a blessed and promised land. We honor the heritage of all who come here, no matter where they come from, because we trust in our country’s genius for making us all Americans – one nation under God.”

–George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

A Traditional Immigrant Nation – Migration to the United States

The United States is proud of its history of immigration. Since 1907, 20.9 million immigrants from all over the world have become U.S. citizens. Of the more than 190 million migrants in the world today, 20% reside in the United States. Between 2000 and 2005, 3.7 million immigrants chose to become citizens and the United States granted legal permanent residence to 5.8 million people. The United States is also the largest refugee resettlement country in the world, having admitted more than 2.66 million refugees since 1975 (a yearly average of 127,000) who came to the United States to escape persecution, conflict, and war.

Migrants bring a rich array of cultures to their new communities. Their contributions have made the United States the country it is today. Americans are bound together by a shared belief in principles guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution – freedom and opportunity, equality before the law, respect and tolerance for differences, and the right of citizens to govern the nation.

The choice to become an American citizen is voluntary, but the United States encourages those eligible to apply for citizenship. The United States promotes civic education. Full civic participation in American life is key to successful integration. Integration is a multi-faceted process that aims

to foster a sense of belonging. Federal, state, and local levels of government, as well as non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, the business sector, communities, and immigrants themselves are essential contributors to the successful political, social, economic, and cultural integration of immigrants.

Immigrants come to the United States in search of opportunity. The welcoming nature of U.S. society creates conditions that

enable them to achieve high levels of success across public and private sectors. Naturalized Americans represent the United States as members of Congress, federal Cabinet Secretaries, and diplomats. They are CEOs, notable scientists, cultural icons, teachers, police officers, and other members of their communities. They are the face of the United States.

The United States promotes safe, legal, and humane migration. The United States seeks to advance effective migration management policies, which include respecting the human rights of migrants, offering protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, opposing uncontrolled and illegal migration, supporting counter-trafficking efforts, and encouraging the rapid integration of legal immigrants.



Courtesy of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

A Country of Compassion – The United States as a Leader in Migration Policy

The United States is committed to promoting safe, legal, and humane migration throughout the world. Embracing international protection obligations, the United States is dedicated to assisting asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking in persons, and other vulnerable migrants. Globally, the United States supports capacity-building activities that emphasize effective and humane migration management. The United States partners with other governments and non-governmental and international organizations to establish programs throughout the world to combat trafficking in persons and assist vulnerable migrants. These programs offer a wide range of return and reintegration services such as transportation, medical care, vocational training, psycho-social counseling, and job creation activities. The *U.S. Return, Reintegration, and Family Reunification Program* provides support to victims of trafficking found in the United States, who elect to return to countries of origin or remain in the United States.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 highlighted vulnerabilities in U.S. border security. Following those events, the U.S. government took dramatic new actions to increase border and travel security, including the creation of a new government agency (the Department of Homeland Security) and the inclusion of biometric data in the processing of visitors and immigrants. A “secure borders, open doors” policy allows the United States to continue to welcome large numbers of immigrants, while ensuring that

national security needs are met. In fact, 18% of the total foreign born population in the United States arrived after the year 2000.

Partnerships – The Importance of Regional Consultative Processes and Networks

The United States believes the most practical way to advance effective, humane migration policies is to support regional migration dialogues. Regional dialogues promote open, informal discussion and information exchange on shared migration concerns. In these fora, member states may identify areas for cooperation and develop migration strategies that are humane and stress orderly, authorized movements of individuals. The congenial, informal nature of these regional approaches allows governments to discuss migration issues of common interest, build consensus, and undertake joint initiatives to improve migration management and the situation of migrants in their regions.

The United States is an active member of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) and the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee, and Migration Policies (IGC). The United States also participates as an observer in the “Bali Process” and supports migration dialogues in other regions. The United States proudly will host the 2007 RCM, which will bring together North and Central American countries.



“The U.S. response to global challenges in population and migration reflects our values of promoting human rights and protecting people from exploitation or coercion.”

–Ellen R. Sauerbrey, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

United States Department of State Publication 11365